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BLIP™
The Video Games Magazine

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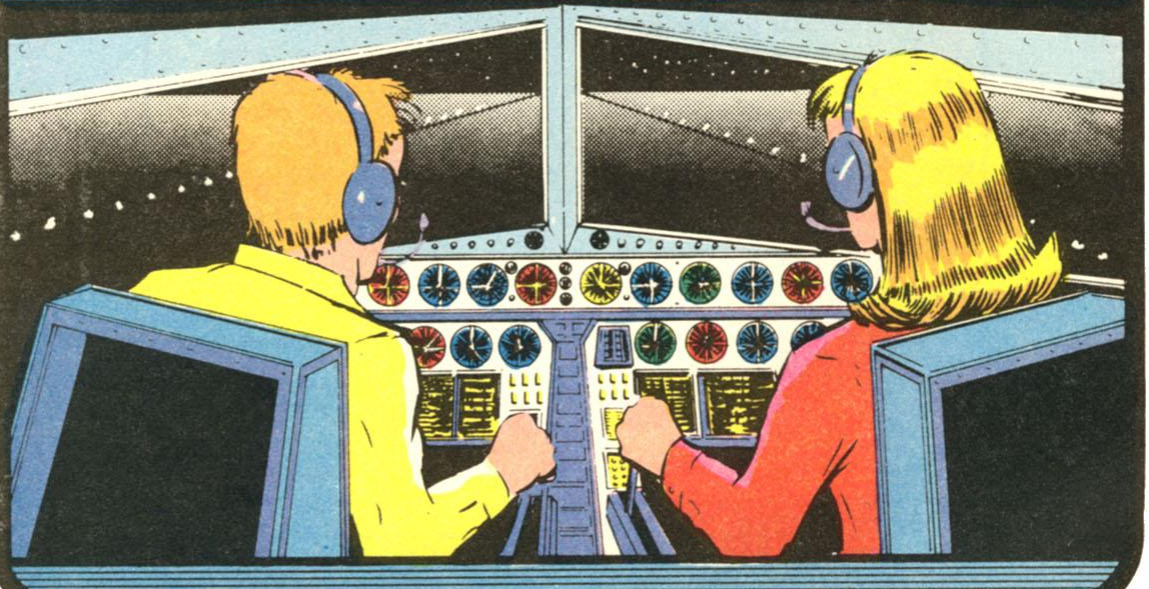


SIMULATED DANGER

It's a routine approach to Chicago's O'Hare airport. Your twin-jet 767 is the newest airliner in the fleet, and it's running like a dream. Your co-pilot runs down a checklist of cockpit chores to be done before landing.

Flying has never been easier than in the 767. The old methods for figuring the plane's position and storm radar are gone. Instead, a TV screen shows your position on a special map, with areas of rain shown in color.

You're right on time and right on course, when, suddenly—

"BEEEEEP!"

At the sound of the warning horn, your eyes flash to the "warning system display." It shows that your right hand engine has flamed out!

The plane is losing speed and altitude. You don't have a second to waste, as you adjust the power of the left-hand engine to make up for the loss of its twin.

As you make the adjustment, your co-pilot tries to re-start the stalled engine. The procedure works, and in a few seconds your screen shows normal readings.

Now the runway gets bigger and bigger in the windshield. You guide the plane down. In less than a minute, you touch down, reverse the thrust of the engines, and slow to a stop.

The image of the runway quickly fades away, and your classmates come up to clap you and your co-pilot on the back.

The landing you've just read about took place not at an airport, but in a classroom. It's an example of "video simulation," a close cousin of the arcade and home games that millions of us use to pass the time of day.

Since *simulation* doesn't mean much more than *pretending*, it's hardly a new idea. In fact, just about every game that's ever been invented is a simulation of something else. Chess, for example, is a simulated war, with two armies fighting each other until one king is captured.

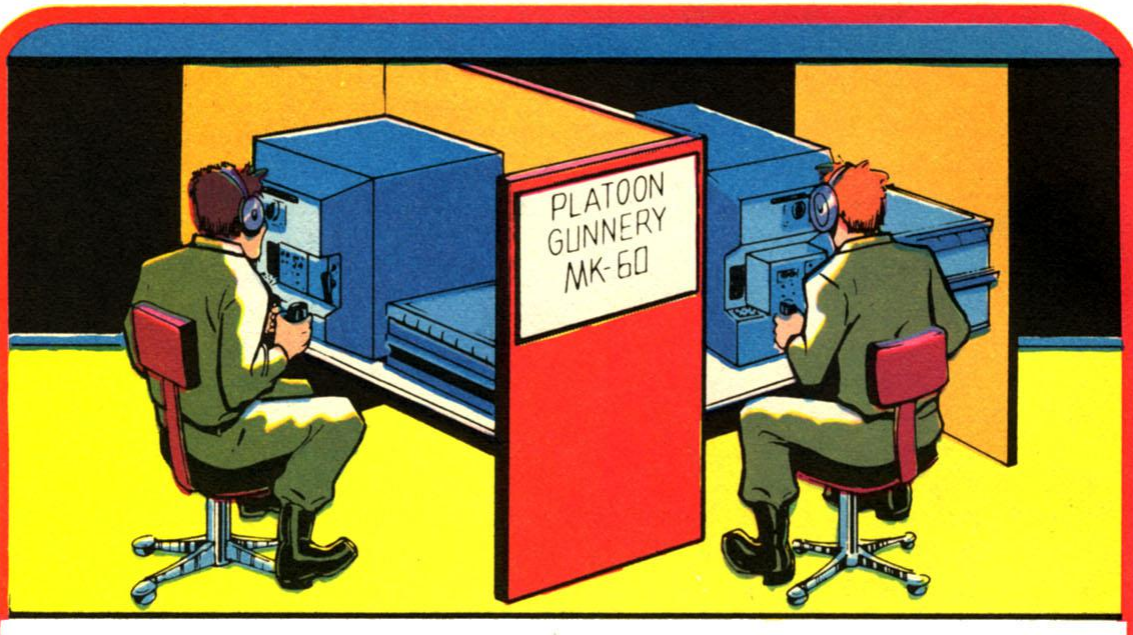
What *is* new in simulation is how techonology has changed it. With microcomputers and the latest in video hardware, it's now possible to create life-like "pretend" situations, complete with color, sounds, and motion.

The Army, for example, uses an MK-60 Tank Gunnery Trainer to teach soldiers wartime skills, without anyone getting hurt or anything being destroyed. By looking through a viewer and wearing a headset, a trainee can watch the terrain go by, see shells sail toward a target and explode, and hear all the action in stereophonic sound.

Like the Boeing jet simulator, the MK-60 uses a videodisk to create pictures and sound. The disk contains thousands of pictures, and sounds to go along with them.

As you sit at the controls, the computer acts as a go-between for you and the videodisk. When you press a certain button or turn a certain knob, the computer figures out what effect this would have in real life. In an instant, it finds that effect in the "movie" on the disk and shows it to you. The result is the closest thing to really landing a huge airplane—or really being in a war.

If this kind of training were done without the help of video simulators,



the cost and the risks would be enormously high. The 767 training, for example, involves not only jet fuel and a very expensive airplane. There are also the crowded skies to worry about and the safety of the flight crew and the people on the ground.

But besides eliminating the costs and the risks, simulators have another big advantage over real-life training. When the exercise is over, the whole experience can be played back for the pilots and the instructors, so they can solve any problem before the next try—or the first real flight.

STAY-AT-HOME TRAVEL

Did we call these simulators a close cousin to video games? Well, there's an even closer relative on the horizon right now—closer because of the amazing entertainment possibilities.

This relative is called a "surrogate travel system." (A *surrogate* is someone who takes the place of another person.) Right now, these systems are used mostly for education, but that won't be true for long.

Here's how a surrogate travel system works. You sit in front of a TV set and watch a scene going by. What you're looking at is exactly what you'd see if you were riding through this scene in a car. One of your controls allows you to speed up or slow down the movement of the scenery.

As your car approaches an intersection, you decide you'd like to see what's down the next side street. You touch the "left-turn" arrow on your controls. When the car reaches the corner, it turns left.

You ride down this side street for a few blocks, and you see a building that looks interesting. Since you're wondering what's inside the building, you press "Stop" on your controls.

The car pulls up in front of the building. You reach out and touch the screen—and the view changes to the inside of the building. When you're finished exploring the building, you get back into your car and go off in search of other interesting sights.

Now, we aren't talking science fiction here. We've just described a system that actually exists. It works basically the same as the training simulators do. A videodisk holds

thousands of pictures of a certain area. And a computer takes your commands and "translates" them into particular pictures from the disk.

What about the entertainment possibilities of a system like this? For that, we turn to Nolan Bushnell, a man with a couple of powerful credentials.

Mr. Bushnell created PONG, the first video game to reach a wide audience. Later, he founded Atari, which is still the most successful of all video-game companies.

Nolan Bushnell is no longer with Atari, but that doesn't mean he's stopped creating. One of his latest interests is surrogate travel systems.

Here's what Mr. Bushnell has in mind. You step into a machine about the size of a large closet. He calls it a "surrogate robot." Your robot is connected electronically to another one in, let's say, Paris, France.

The other robot follows your commands and goes traveling through the streets of Paris. Back home, you're surrounded by all the sights and sounds bombarding the other robot.

So, Mr. Bushnell says, for a charge of a few dollars, you could stroll down a Paris street during the day and sleep in your own bed at night.

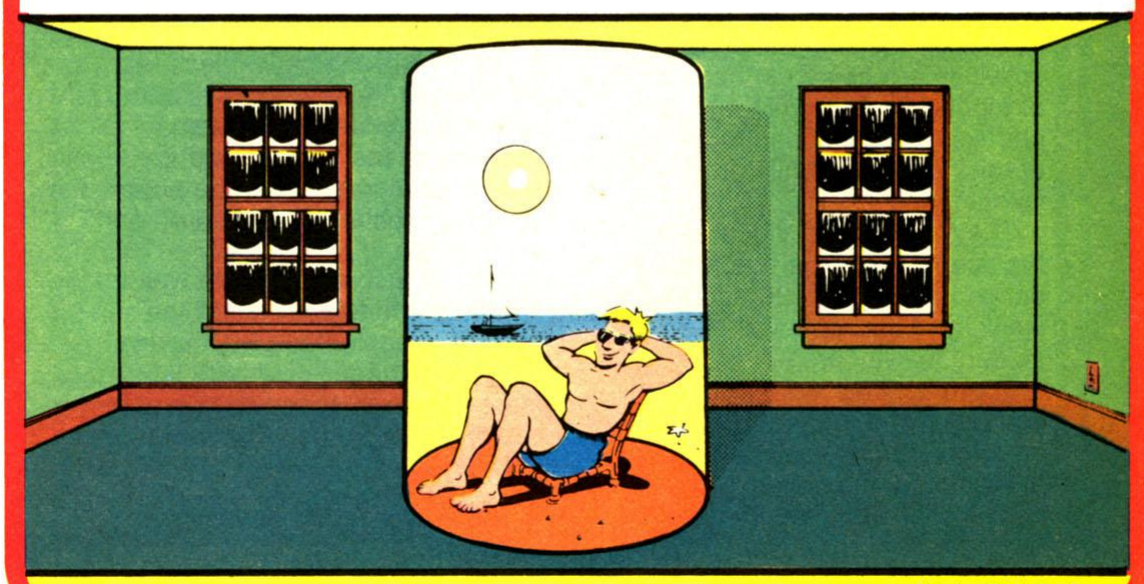
Video games began when PONG swept the nation about a decade ago. If you look at PONG now, you might wonder what all the fuss was about. It has a black-and-white screen with three graphic symbols and very slow, very limited action. Compared to the beautiful and complicated games we take for granted, PONG looks almost lifeless.

But the current games are only another step along a pretty exciting road. Simulators and travel systems are a clue to the kinds of things we can expect a few years from now.

We might not even be able to imagine the video activities we'll have in 10 years. Fortunately, the designers can.

And as long as they keep imagining—and then designing and programming what they've come up with—we can just prepare ourselves for one astounding surprise after another.

—John Tebbel



Art by Rick Parker

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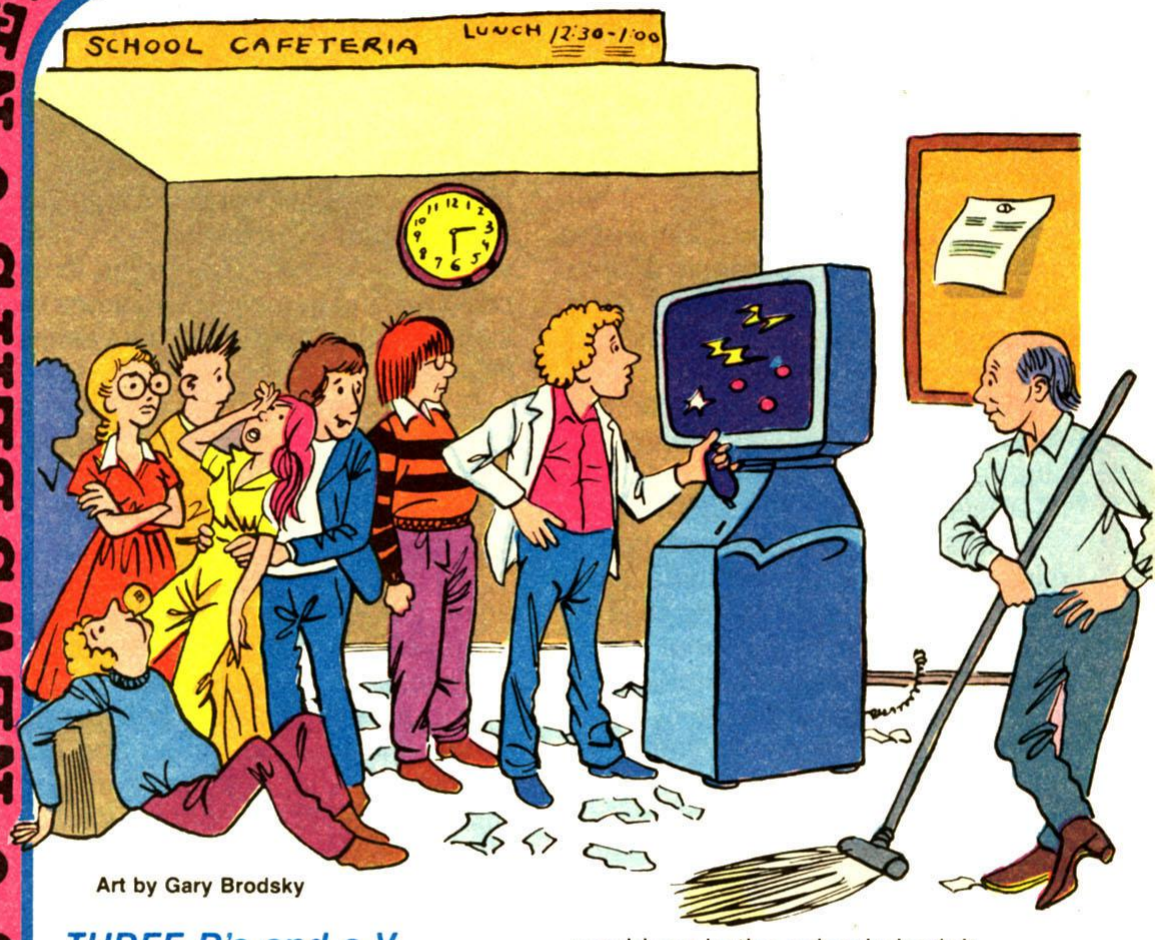


Art by Gary Brodsky

THREE R's and a V

All over the country, school activities are being cut back for lack of money. In California, at least one school district has found a way of raising money while entertaining its students.

They've installed video games in the school buildings. Each machine brings in between $20 and $60 a week, and the money is used for student activity programs.

The machines were put in over a year ago, and the first reaction was an angry outcry from some parents. In response, the district removed the machines. Then they interviewed students, teachers, and administrators about the situation.

They found that having the machines in the schools hadn't caused any noticeable problems. Students weren't paying less attention to their subjects. There were no attendance problems because of the games, and the machines didn't have to be supervised by teachers who had other work to do.

So, the recommendation was to put the machines back into the schools. People have fun playing them, and the district has a little more money to spend on things they couldn't afford otherwise.

SIP AND BLIP

You're well into a game of DONKEY KONG at the arcade, and you're really hot—in more ways than one. Not only are you

beating your own high score, but beads of sweat are forming on your forehead. Your mouth has gone dry. You sure could use a cold drink, but there's no way you're going to stop this game for that.

It's a familiar problem. And what the Coca-Cola company has come up with may not really be a solution, but it sure is a step in the right direction. Coke has figured out a way for us to sip and blip at the same time.

Coke has been testing a vending machine with a built-in video game bonus. For the price of a drink, you get not only a Coke, but a brief video game as well.

In one game, you try to catch cans of Coke thrown by a monkey in a tree. If you choose the other game, your task is to catch flashing letters on the screen until you've spelled out "COKE."

The people at Coca-Cola told BLIP that the tests have been successful, and they expect to be placing these machines around the country very soon. So far, though, there are no plans for home versions of the new games.

DIAL-A-GAME

If you, or someone you know, owns an Intellivision system, you may already know about PlayCable. PlayCable links Intellivision to a cable TV channel that allows you to play whatever game is being telecast at a certain time.

This is the first step in a system that will soon allow you to use your telephone to make hundreds of games available for your TV screen.

The Game Line system, for example, will soon be able to send games—over the phone—to an Atari 5200. The 5200 has a slot that will hook up to a telephone. The owner will call Game Line, order a certain game, and have it sent directly to the TV screen.

You'll be charged a small fee for the game, and you'll have to call each time you want to play it. Someone has compared this to paying a radio station to play a record whenever you want to hear it, instead of going to the store to buy the record.

Come to think of it, that doesn't sound like a bad idea itself.

THE CHAMP

Andrew Levine is one person who will never have any trouble justifying the time he devotes to video games. Andrew is 15 and lives in Needham, MA. He recently won $10,000 for being the best ATLANTIS player in sight.

ATLANTIS is a cartridge for the Atari VCS, introduced by Imagic last fall. To publicize their new game, Imagic sponsored a nation-wide competition with a $10,000 first prize.

The four finalists (three of them under age 19) were flown to Bermuda for a competition that would determine who was the best ATLANTIS player in the country. All four topped a million points. But Andrew walked off with first prize by reaching a whopping score of 1,968,800.

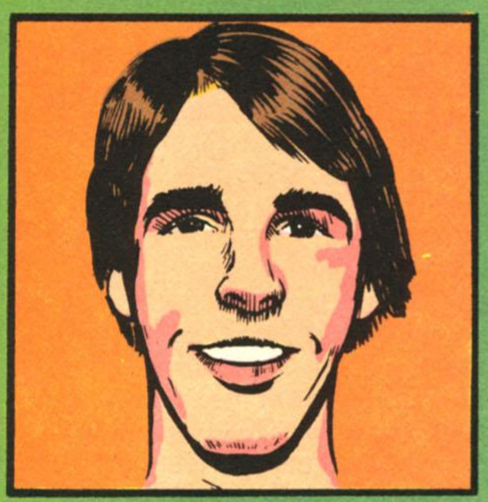
Dennis Koble, who designed the game for Imagic, was asked how Andrew could achieve a score like that. Koble explained that Andrew figured out a strategy that would result in the most points per minute that the game would allow. Then he worked out a playing system based on that strategy.

That makes it sound pretty simple. And Andrew makes it look pretty simple. But if you've ever set out to master a video game, you know that Andrew earned the money he got from Imagic.

VIDEO HALL OF FAME

Eric Ginner and Mark Robichek have been friends for some time. Eric is a 20-year-old accountant. Mark, 23, designs electronic systems that help factories run more efficiently. They both live in Mountain View, California, which happens to be about 5 miles from where Atari has its headquarters.

Mark and Eric are two of the most accomplished video game players in the world. Mark currently holds the world's record for TUTANKHAM (244,920), a game in which you, as an archaeologist, try to find treasure



Eric Ginner

hidden deep in a pyramid, while assorted nasties try to do you in. He also holds the record for FROGGER (442,330), a game described in BLIP TIPS II of this issue.

Eric holds the world's record for MOON PATROL (573,480). At one time or another over the past 18 months, he has also been the record-holder for such games as DIG DUG, ROBOTRON, TEMPEST, and CENTIPEDE.

"My record in CENTIPEDE was around 400,000,' Eric recalls. "But nowadays it's possible to rack up scores of 25,000,000 in CENTIPEDE, and even beyond that. In fact, I could probably play CENTIPEDE forever, as long as the machine held out."

Eric says he could set records in any number of other games, if he wanted to. And he doesn't sound as if he's merely boasting.

"But it takes 30 to 40 hours to set a record," he points out. "And there are other things I prefer to do with my time."

Mark told BLIP that he likes maze games best. FROGGER is his favorite. This is true even though he finds that the game acts in strange fashion when you reach very high scores.

One bizarre incident involves the lady frog, dressed in purple, who appears on the screen from time to time. If you can get your frog to jump on the lily pad with her and carry her safely into a dock, you get bonus points.

Well, according to Mark, after FROGGER hits about 50,000 points, the lady frog is no longer purple. Instead, she's often *invisible*. The only reason you can spot her is that whenever you jump onto a pad with her, your feet turn red.

Not long ago, *Life* Magazine assembled the 18 best video game players at the Twin Galaxies Arcade in Ottumwa, Iowa. The champions were photographed in front of the glittering International Scoreboard there. Mark and Eric were among those invited, and BLIP talked to them during their visit.

They told us they were introduced to video games when they were in high school. In fact, they first met at an arcade.

"I used to spend 20 or 30 hours a week in arcades when I was in high school," Mark recalled. "Even so, the games never cost me much money. I was always good, and a quarter lasted me a long time. If I spent five dollars a week, it was a lot."

Mark continued playing video games when he went on to college at Stanford. "I used the games to re-

lax myself before exams," he says. "The night before a test, after I had done all the studying I felt was possible, I'd visit an arcade and spend two or three hours playing games. It refreshed me. I was able to get a restful sleep and be in great shape for the exam the next morning."

While Eric was in high school, he got caught up in the ASTEROIDS craze of 1979 and 1980, when it ranked as *the* game to beat. And Eric beat it, all right. He was the first player to score 100,000 points in ASTEROIDS, and thus turn the game over.

He did well, in fact, on just about every game he tried. "In those days," Eric recalls, "there was no record-keeping service like the International Scoreboard. I used to visit different arcades to find out if my scores were the highest—and they usually were. I also talked to the people at Atari, who kept track of high scores in other parts of the country. Based on their figures, I held a bunch of records."

From time to time, game enthusiasts hear about Eric and call him for gaming advice. "They're usually people," he says, "who have reached a certain plateau, and can't seem to get beyond it. They want to know what to do.

"Someone called me about TEMPEST not long ago. He couldn't get beyond the green level. I told him how to eliminate the fuseballs at that level, and I think it solved his problem."

Like anyone who excels at video games, Mark and Eric have fast reflexes. But they also have excellent memories.

"You have to be able to remember patterns," Mark explains. "You have to be able to keep track of where the danger spots are on each board.

"Patience is another quality that helps. I always take it slow. I make fewer mistakes that way.

"When kids watch me play TUTANKHAM, they're sometimes astonished. I'll just park the archaeologist in a corner and let him sit there. 'Use your flash button!' someone will shout. They don't realize that sometimes it pays to wait—and wait."

Besides quickness and sharp memory, Eric and Mark have at least one other trait in common. They both take video games in stride. They're not fanatical about the games, and they never have been. The games are only one of their many interests.

Mark likes basketball, for instance. "I used to play the game," he says. "But now I enjoy it as a spectator. And I officiate at high school games."

He's also active in auto rallying (a sport he describes as "cleverness driving"), and he collects coins.

Mark Robichek

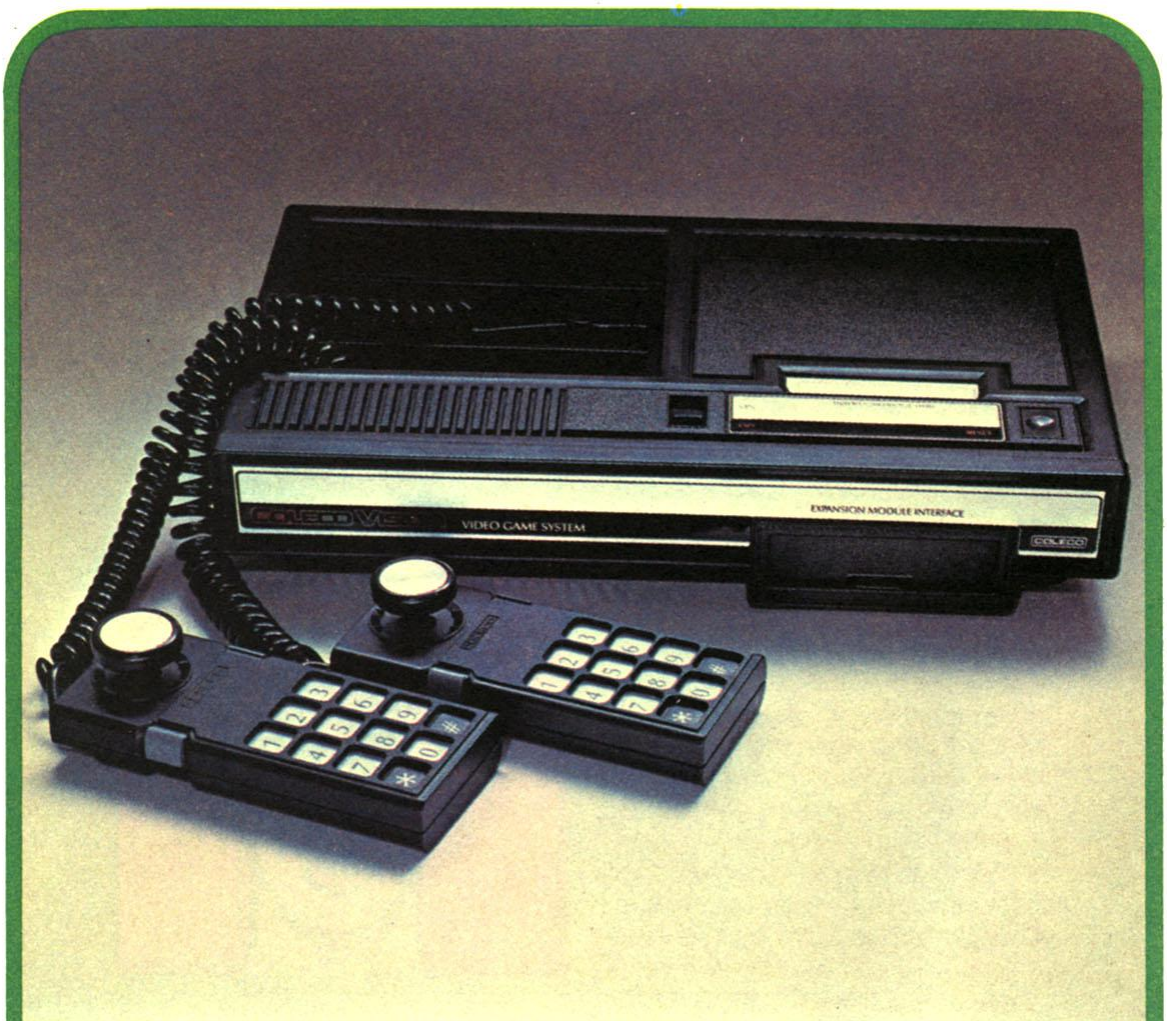
Eric's other interests include playing cards. He and Mark are part of a group of local video game players who have a regular Saturday night poker session.

Neither Mark nor Eric ever skipped school to hang around arcades. They never spent more on the games than they could afford. The games never encouraged them to become violent, or anything else people might disapprove of.

To both young men, video games are like TV or popular music—an enjoyable pastime. The two of them just happen to be world-champion performers at the games.

—George Sullivan

PLAYER'S CHOICE



Every time you turn around, a new batch of cartridges—or even a new video game system—has appeared in the stores. We wouldn't even try to review all these new products for you. If we did, there wouldn't be space for much of anything else.

So, PLAYER'S CHOICE does the next best thing. Here's where BLIP's editors tell you about products that we found especially good. We won't bother with things we didn't like.

COLECOVISION

Let's just say that Colecovision has set a standard that everybody else is going to have to try to beat—or at least measure up to. Even before we hooked up the console to our TV set, we found a pleasant surprise.

The hand controller fits more comfortably in the palm of your hand than most other controllers do. It has an 8-directional knob that gives you a lot more confidence than the disk controller on Intellivision. And it has action buttons on both sides of the controller. (This was a very big deal, since the editor who tried it first is left-handed.)

But the good news about the controller was nothing compared to what we

saw on the screen. The set comes packaged with a DONKEY KONG cartridge, so we tried it out first. To put it simply: It was the best graphic "translation" we'd ever seen of an arcade game into a home system.

We have since seen the DONKEY KONG cartridges that Coleco makes for the Atari and the Intellivision systems, and they don't even seem like the same game. The reason is that Colecovision has a larger memory than the other two. This allows its games to have not only better graphics, but also more variety in the playing possibilities.

When we checked out the other cartridges, we weren't at all disappointed. (You can read about our excitement over Coleco's VENTURE in Blip Tips I, on pages 22-24.) The biggest surprise came when we slipped the SMURFS cartridge into the slot.

We were sure the cartridge wouldn't appeal to us. Smurfs are characters for very young kids. We're grownups. What could those characters mean to us?

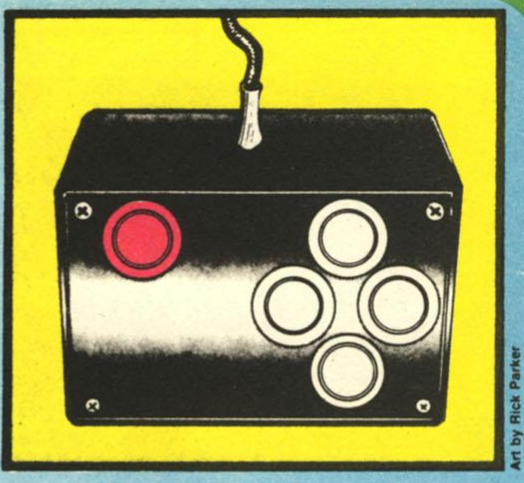
Well, the picture that showed up on our screen was so appealing, so cartoon-like, that we forgot how grownup we were. We got into that game as deeply as we had gotten into the others.

For an extra $60 or so, you can get an adapter that allows you to play any cartridge made for Atari on a Coleco Vision console. These games won't look any better than they do on Atari. But the adapter does mean that you can accommodate many more games than you can on any other system.

FINGERTIP CONTROLLER

Not everyone is happy using a joystick. Some home players long for the button controls found on many arcade games. So, a few hardware manufacturers have tried to fill the need with controllers that replace the joystick with buttons.

It isn't a good idea to buy this kind of attachment through the mail, if you can avoid it. You can never be sure that the piece will actually do what the ad says it will do. It's best to try to find a video store that sells hardware, and try out the controller you're thinking of buying.



Art by Rick Parker

If you can't find such a store, however, we've seen a controller that we can recommend. It's made by KY Enterprises, and it's called the Fingertip Controller.

Unlike some other button controllers, it has its four buttons placed logically—the top button is for moving up on the screen, the bottom for moving down, and so on. That means you don't have to learn what each buton is for, and you won't get frustrated trying to use it.

The Fingertip Controller has two problems you should know about. First, it's made for right-handed players, just as most joysticks are. (The action button is on the left.) Second, it isn't very good for games that call for diagonal movement. To move diagonally, you have to press two buttons at exactly the same time, and that takes some practice.

But if a button control is more to your liking than a joystick, this is one you can depend on. The Fingertip Controller costs $19.95. Or you can buy a kit for $14.95 and assemble the controller yourself. If you can't get it in a store, you can mail a check or money order to KY Enterprises, 195 Claremont #288, Long Beach, California 90803.

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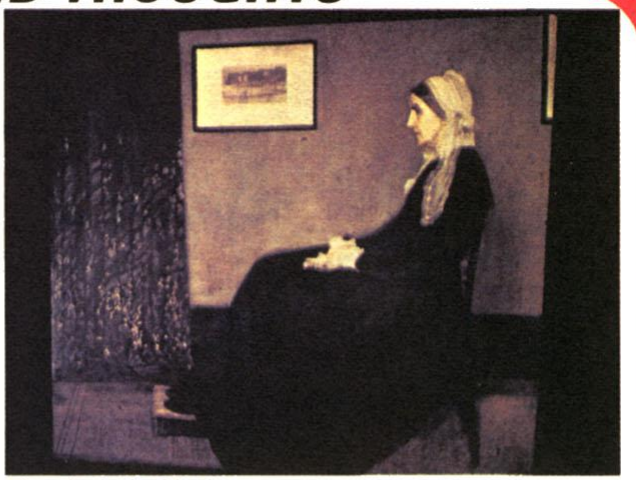
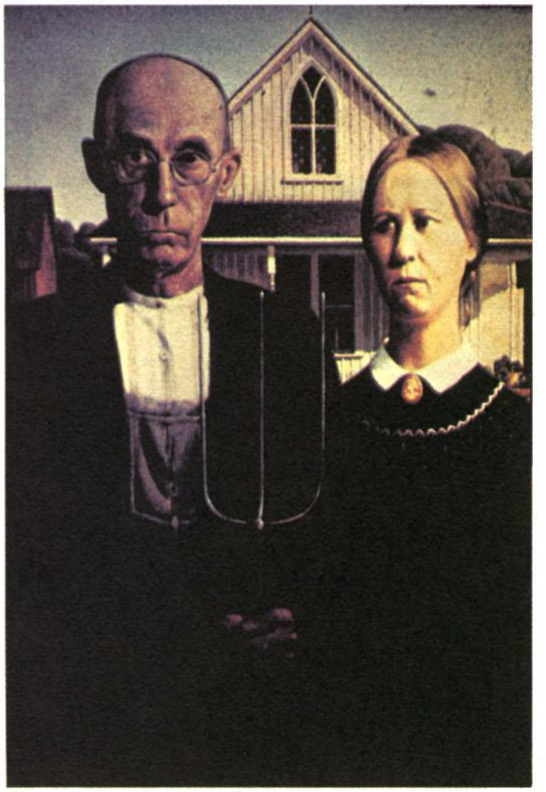
SECOND THOUGHTS

The Blue Boy
Thomas Gainsborough



The Artist's Mother
James Whistler

Mona Lisa
Leonardo da Vinci

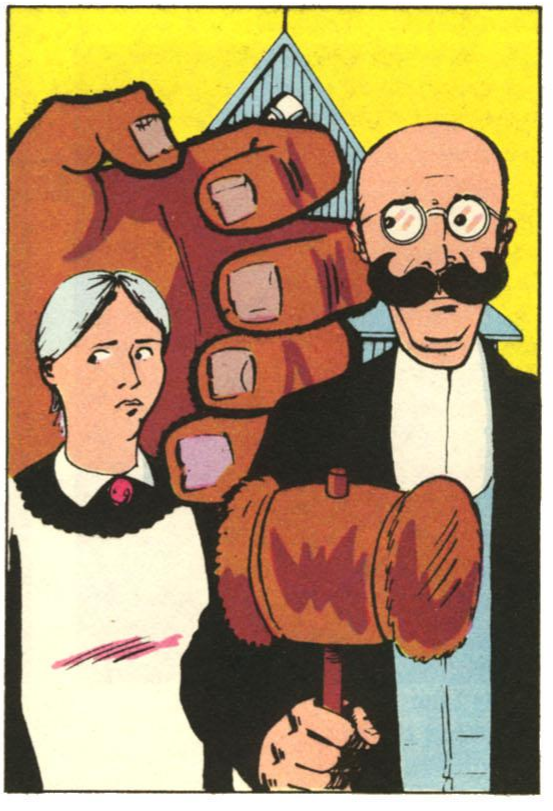


American Gothic
Grant Wood

No, BLIP is not going into the art reproduction business. We've included these four masterpieces here to put you in the right frame of mind for what's to come.

We were in a museum recently, and we got to wondering what these four great artists would do if they were alive today. We thought they might be as worked up over video games as the rest of us are.

If they were, we might see paintings like these . . .



Illustrated by Michael Carlin
Concept by Martha Thomases, John Robert Tebbel, and Michael Carlin

VIDEO GAMES ARE A WASTE OF VALUABLE TIME.

VIDEO GAMES ENCOURAGE VIOLENCE.

THEY KEEP KIDS FROM READING AND RELATING TO OTHER PEOPLE.

VIDEO GAMES ARE ADDICTIVE.

Expert Opinion

You've heard all those complaints—and more—about video games. So have we. We decided to find out how much truth there is to complaints like these.

We had a long talk with Mitchell Robin, a professor of child psychology at New York City Technical College. Professor Robin is a fan of video games. So are his children, who are 5 and 8 years old. The professor has worked as a consultant to Activision. Here's how our conversation went.

BLIP: Some adults think video games are bad for kids. What do you say to an adult who believes that?

ROBIN: I tell them that there are many ways in which video games are *good* for young people. The most obvious benefit is the one we hear about all the time—eye-hand coordination.

BLIP: What is that good for?

ROBIN: If you want to learn to type, or play the violin—or do surgery—you need good eye-hand coordination.

BLIP: What else can video games do for you?

Professor Mitchell Robin

ROBIN: Playing video games seems to improve attention span. That means you can sit still longer and pay attention to a teacher, for example. With a better attention span, you'll learn more. Another thing is that game players seem to get better at paying attention to small detail.

BLIP: How can that help?

ROBIN: It can make you a better reader. In one study, a group of poor readers were split into two groups. One group played video games, and the other didn't. The game players showed more improvement in their reading scores.

BLIP: What about computers? Do video games have anything to do with them?

ROBIN: Children and adults who get involved with games become more comfortable with the computer, more curious about it, more eager to learn how to use it.

BLIP: Why is that important?

ROBIN: In the very near future, being able to use a computer will be as important as being able to read or do math. So people who are comfortable with computers will have an advantage when it comes to jobs with the new technology.

BLIP: Are there any other ways that video games can be good for young people?

ROBIN: Yes, there's at least one more that I can think of. Good game players tend to be more aware of their own abilities and limitations. Research shows that people who know their abilities and limitations are more successful at jobs and in the world in general. They know what situations to get involved in and what situations to avoid.

BLIP: Now let's talk about some of the criticisms made against video games. Do the games teach players to enjoy violence?

ROBIN: I don't think the people who play the games see them as violent. The story of a game may include shooting, or blowing something up. But most players see themselves as heroes, who are defending themselves and their territory *against* violence.

BLIP: But some adults worry about the warlike nature of many of the games. They say we're raising a generation of kids who are being trained to kill without emotion, by pushing buttons. Do the games make people numb to violence and death?

ROBIN: That would be less true of video games than of most of the violent programs on TV. Players of video games are *actively* engaged in a make-believe activity. They're in control of the situation. They aren't just passively watching a story in which someone is rewarded for being violent, as in many movies and TV shows.

BLIP: Are kids wasting time on video games, when they could be reading or doing homework?

ROBIN: Some adults define any activity that they don't approve of as "wasting time." But an important part of being young is having time to "waste." Young people need time to learn about the world, about themselves, about their limitations and abilities. If kids are "wasting time," maybe that's exactly what they *should* be doing.

BLIP: Wouldn't it be better if they read books instead?

ROBIN: It isn't an either-or situation. Who says you *either* read *or* play video games? If reading is one of the things you do, then you'll do it when you aren't playing video games. If you don't usually read, then you won't do it, whether the video games are around or not.

BLIP: Some people say video games keep kids from being active.

ROBIN: That isn't true, because the games *are* very active. It isn't like watching someone play football. You have to respond to a video

game. It creates a kind of stress that's good for you. Your heart beats rapidly, and it gets the same kind of healthy workout that it gets when you jog or play football.

BLIP: How about socializing? Should kids who play video games be spending more time with their friends?

ROBIN: We've found that most people want to play video games with other people around. Two or more people get involved in a challenge of skills or high scores. There's a lot of involvement with other people, both at home and in the arcades. You invite people to play, or you expect them to watch while you play.

BLIP: But wouldn't there be more involvement with other people if they were playing cards or board games?

ROBIN: I know people who would bite your head off if you talked during a bridge or poker game. I've played Monopoly with people who want no conversation that doesn't relate to the game being played. On the other hand, kids do a lot of talking about video games. There's as much exchanging of information as there is with any other topic that people are interested in.

BLIP: Now we come to one of the most serious charges. Can someone become addicted to video games?

ROBIN: Yes, but addiction to video games—or anything else—would be a symptom of another problem. People who become addicted to something are trying to escape from a world that's too much for them to handle. The games—or TV, or gambling, or even reading—might be the *way* they escape. But it wouldn't be the *cause*. If I wanted to escape from the responsibilities I have, and you kept me away from video games, I'd find some other way of escaping—something else to become addicted to. Addiction isn't the fault of the game. It's the fault of the situation a person is in.

BLIP: How about the arcades? Are they bad places for kids to go?

ROBIN: Some of them aren't patrolled properly. Some arcades are fire hazards. I wouldn't send my own kids to some of them, because of the kind of crowd they attract. But the same thing is true of certain theaters or shopping centers.

BLIP: A probation officer told us about one kid who took his family's rent money and spent $150 in quarters at an arcade.

ROBIN: Obviously, the kid is hooked on games. But he might just as easily be addicted to something else, like drugs or alcohol. If he were addicted to books, and he stole money to buy books, his problem would be just as serious. The problem is the addiction, not what he's addicted to.

BLIP: Is there any way to be sure that you aren't becoming addicted to video games?

ROBIN: It's a realistic worry. You have to ask yourself, "Am I doing this too much? Is my schoolwork being affected? Am I getting along badly with my family? Have I stopped seeing my friends?"

BLIP: Suppose the answer to questions like those is "Yes"

ROBIN: If it is, and your only activity is playing video games, then you're addicted. You need to talk about it with a parent or teacher, or someone else who cares about you. But if your grades are good, you're getting along with your family, and spending time with your friends, you don't have much to worry about.

BLIP: Suppose all those things are all right, and you're *still* spending a lot of time playing video games.

ROBIN: Then you're not doing it because you're addicted. You're doing it because you're having fun. And there's certainly nothing wrong with that.

BLIP interview by Lewis Gardner

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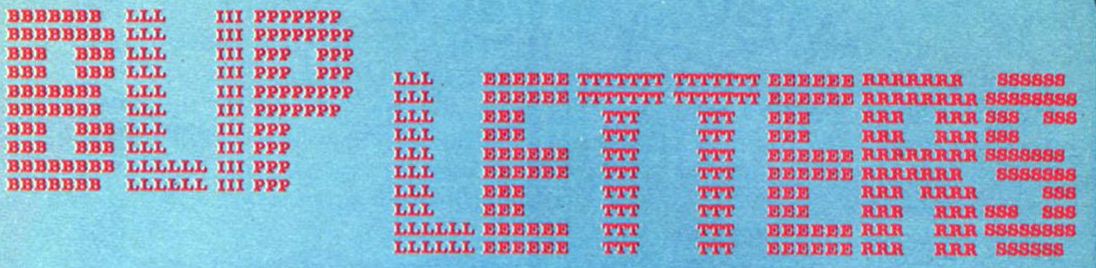
QUARTER... QUARTER!
RON ZALME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Here's the new feature we promised you last month. This is where you get to express opinions, ask questions, or just get things off your chest. Address your letters to:

BLIP LETTERS
Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South
New York, N.Y. 10016

Finally, a video games magazine that I can afford! Your first issue was pretty good. But I have one complaint. "Video Games of the Stars" was okay, but I hope you aren't going to do a lot of stuff like that. If I want to read about TV stars, I'll buy a fan magazine. Stick to video games and you'll be all right.

Ron Parkes
Santa Monica, CA

In "Player's Choice" in your February issue, you said the Arcadia-2001 sells for "as little as $100." I went to four stores, and the lowest price I found was $129.95. Can you tell me where I can get it for $100?

Amy Thalberg
Trenton, NJ

We can't give you the name of a store, but the people at Emerson Radio assured us that discount stores are selling the Arcadia-2001 for $100. You'll just have to shop around a little more.

I liked "Video Jokes," but "Games We'll Never See" really threw me. They almost sounded like real games to me. Are you sure you made them up?

Adam Kantor
Seattle, WA

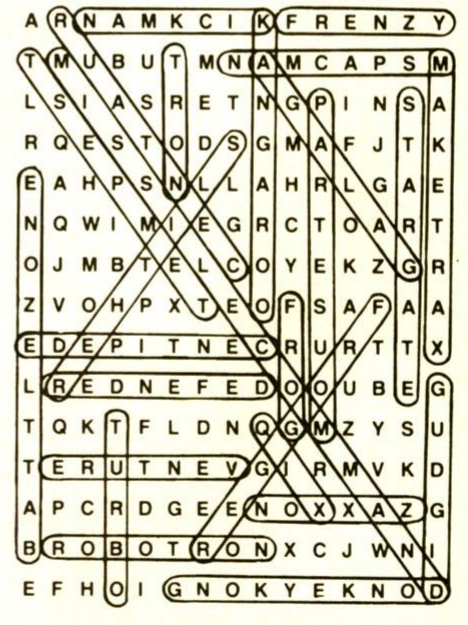
Yes, we're sure. However, sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between the real thing and a joke. You'll see what we mean if you take a look at page 32 of this issue.

I'd like to see an article in your magazine about how video games work. What are the chances?

Lee Turin
Chicago, IL

The chances are very good. In future issues of BLIP, you'll find plenty of information about computers, how video games work, and even how you can take the first steps in programming your own video games. The letters we get will tell us how much of this kind of information you readers want.

SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY'S PUZZLE
Here's what the completed word search should look like after you've found all 25 names in last month's issue of BLIP.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B R O B O T R O N X C J W N I
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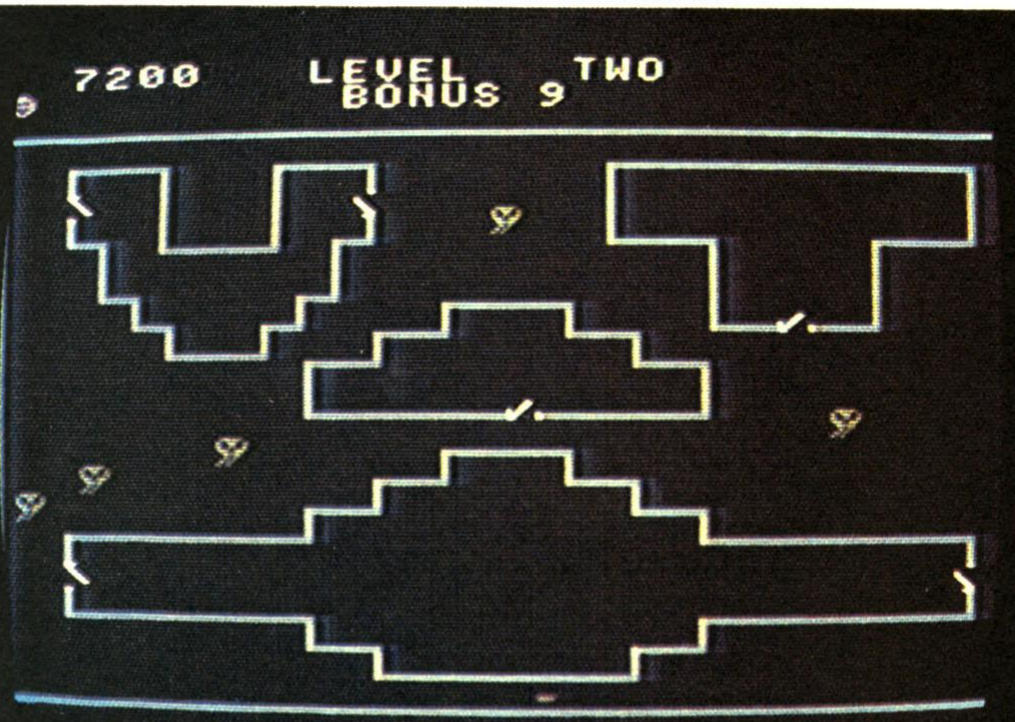
BLIP TIPS!

COLECOVISION'S VENTURE

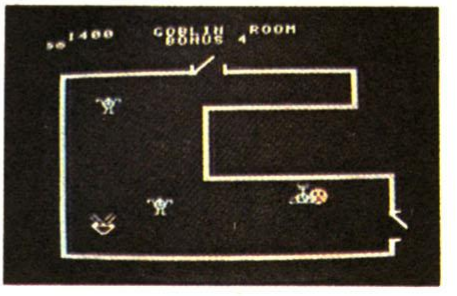


If you've ever dropped some quarters into a VENTURE machine, you know it's an arcade game that can quicken your pulse and turn your palm into a damp cloth. It's a fast-moving, hazard-filled game that offers a challenge to even the best of the arcade crowd.

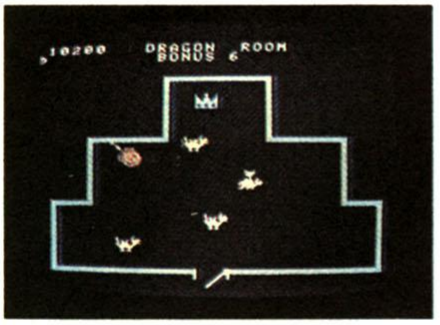
Last year, Coleco came up with the home rights to VENTURE. Then they set out to "capture the arcade experience" in a cartridge. And BLIP is happy to report that they've succeeded–quick pulse, sweaty palms, and all.

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

The character you control is called Winky, and his task is to enter a series of rooms, avoid the hazard in each

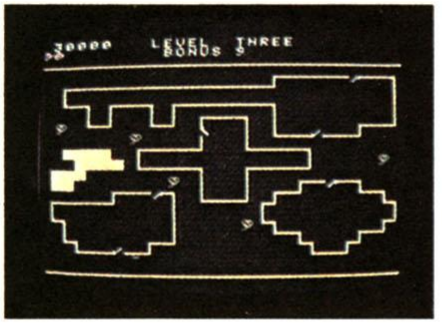


room, capture a treasure, and get out as fast as he can. He travels through three different floors of a dungeon, with four rooms on each floor.



When he has made his way through all 12 rooms, the pattern begins again. If he gets through each floor three times, he will capture all 36 treasures that the game provides.

Each floor begins as a hallway, with the outlines of the four rooms. On this board, Winky appears as a white dot. You use the directional knob to move him around the hallways and into one of the rooms. The danger comes from the Hallmonsters—little green creatures that float around the hall in search of Winky. If he runs into one of them, he's dead.

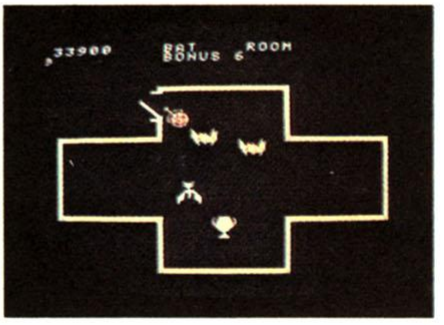


THE ROOMS

If you can avoid the Hallmonsters, you'll get Winky into one of the rooms. Each room has a different shape—and a different threat.

When you get into a room, the screen changes from the hallway to the inside of the room. Winky himself changes into what looks like a smiling basketball. An arrow points out from the top of his head.

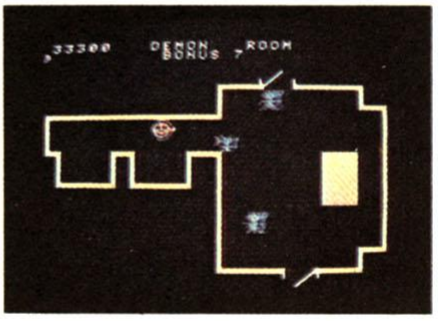
You use the knob to point the arrow at an attacker, and the action button to fire arrows in that direction. (Winky fires arrows only in the rooms,



not in the hallways.)

Winky has to make his way to the treasure in one corner of the room, then get safely out with the treasure. If he can kill the attacking monsters in the process, you'll get more points. If not, you'll still get credit for capturing the treasure.

There's one other danger running throughout the game. Winky has a limited time to grab a treasure and get out of a room. If he takes too long, one of the Hallmonsters will come charging into the room and destroy him.



TACTICS

When you begin playing VENTURE, all the rooms—and all the

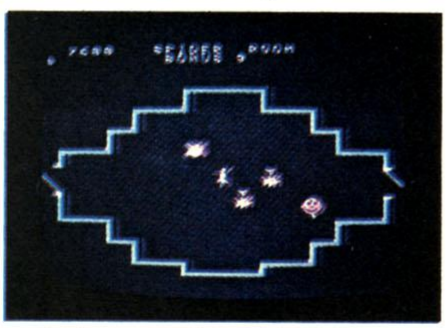
Hallmonsters—are an equal threat. The first few times around, you'll be losing Winkies every few seconds. (You start out with five of them, but there are ways to get extras as you go on.)

As you get better, though, you'll find that some of the rooms are more dangerous than others. You'll have to decide for yourself whether to save the dangerous rooms on each level for last, or get them out of the way first.

Here's our evaluation of the rooms in each level, with the most dangerous named first, the least dangerous last.

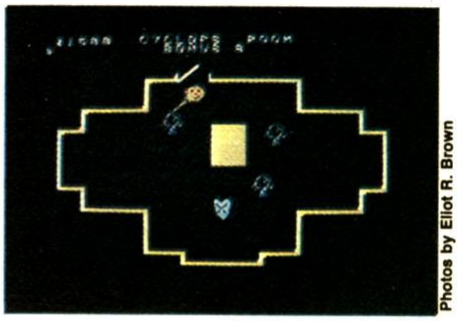
FIRST LEVEL	SECOND LEVEL	THIRD LEVEL
Wall Room	Dragon Room	Bat Room
Skeleton Room	Spider Room	Cyclops Room
Serpent Room	Two-Headed Room	Genie Room
Goblin Room	Troll Room	Demon Room

On the first level, the Wall Room doesn't have any monsters to shoot at. Instead, you have to avoid four electrified walls that keep moving in toward the treasure and out toward the exits. It's all a question of timing, but don't forget that a Hallmonster will come in if you take too long.



The Dragon Room on the second level may be the most difficult challenge in the whole game. As you enter the room, four dragons are waiting for you just inside the door. Your reflexes have to be fast if you're going to shoot them or get out of their way.

On the third level, the Bat Room also presents you with an immediate challenge, since the bats are near the entrance. But they move around more than the dragons, and that gives you a chance to slip into the middle of the room quickly.



Photos by Eliot R. Brown

SCORING POINTS

It's a good idea not to worry too much about points when you begin playing VENTURE. Just concentrate on grabbing treasures and getting out safely. Once you've mastered all three floors, you can start working on killing as many monsters as possible. That will increase your point total.

Just remember that escaping with treasures is what the game is really all about. Get all four treasures, and you move on to the next level.

Extra Winkies are also important. Once you've reached the third level, you get one every time you complete another level. That makes it possible for the game to go on for a long, long time.

Maybe too long, as a matter of fact. We watched one superstar conquer one level after another. She captured all 36 treasures. At that point, level 9 began to reappear over and over.

She finally got tired of it when she reached one million points. It may take you a while to get that good at VENTURE. But we can promise you you'll have a lot of fun getting there.

BLiP TIPS II

THE MAZE CRAZE

The PAC-MAN rage has resulted in T-shirts, coffee mugs, bumper stickers, Frisbees, and dozens of other products. The frisky yellow disk has inspired everything from greeting cards to playing cards, from wrapping paper to wallpaper.

We're more interested, however, in the bunch of spinoffs (or imitations, depending on your point of view) that The Pac has triggered. We're talking about maze games in which a cute little character is pursued by determined enemies.

None of these games has yet come close to the popularity of PAC-MAN, but each one has its large fan following. So, this month's arcade tips will give you some pointers on how to approach each game.

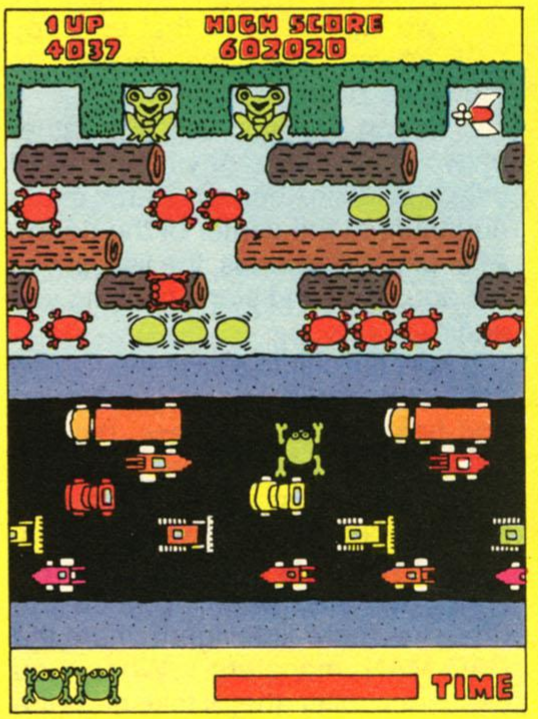
FROGGER

FROGGER is probably the most popular of the maze games to follow in PAC-MAN's wake. The idea in this game is to maneuver one frog after another across a busy freeway and a river infested with crocodiles. If you're successful, you jump the frog into one of five docks at the top of the screen, then go back and start again.

It's been said that maze games are appealing because their controls are simple. FROGGER certainly qualifies on this count. The only control is a four-directional joystick that you use to move the frog forward, backward, or to either side.

You have 60 seconds to get each frog into a dock. On the first few screens, that's plenty of time. The key in the early stages of the game is patience. Wait long enough, and you'll find big gaps in the traffic.

There are gaps in the later screens too, but the traffic is moving faster. Try to memorize the gap patterns on these screens.



The most difficult dock to enter is the one at the far left of the screen. You first have to maneuver the frog to the left of the dock, and there aren't many chances to do this.

But we've figured out one way that usually works. Ride to the left on a turtle in the second row from the top. Keep your eye on the left edge of the screen. Before you reach it, jump

onto a log that's moving to the right. Then hop immediately into the left-hand dock.

If you get into trouble—not only with this maneuver, but any time—simply jump backward and make a fresh start. Somehow, even experienced players forget that this is possible.

MAKE TRAX

In MAKE TRAX, you're a paintbrush trying to paint a maze while being chased by a pair of goldfish. (No, we did *not* make that up.) You have a four-directional joystick to move the paintbrush.

You can arm yourself with either of two paint rollers. Any time you roll over a goldfish, the fish returns to the aquarium at the center of the board. After several seconds, the fish leaves the aquarium and starts chasing you again.

It isn't difficult to outwit the fish on the first board. If you pick up a roller and head for an overpass, the fish will follow you. Just before you reach the other side, stop and reverse direction. Then you can devour the fish.

After you work this strategy a few times, the fish begin to wise up. (They're more intelligent than the PAC-MAN monsters.) When you head for a roller, they'll take off in the opposite direction.

While you're dealing with the fish, you also have to worry about painting as much of the board as you can. You can get a good deal of painting done while the fish are waiting in the aquarium.

Scattered around the maze are six boxes. Each one holds a different character. On the first screen, for example, a cat comes out of one of the boxes and starts making tracks on your paint job. You have to paint over these tracks before you can go on to the next round.

As you become more experienced, you'll learn to anticipate the arrival of these characters. When you expect one to appear, stay close to its box. Then wallop it as quickly as you can, preventing the creation of a lot of tracks.

MOUSETRAP

MOUSETRAP is a maze game that appears to be a close relative of PAC-MAN, but it has a couple of unusual twists of its own. You score points by moving your mouse through the maze, collecting pieces of cheese as you go. Your mouse is pursued by—what else—cats.

When a cat gets too close, you simply eat a dog bone, which you'll find in each corner of the screen. After you've eaten a bone, you press the "dog" button at the center of the control panel. That turns the mouse into a dog, and he chases the cats away.

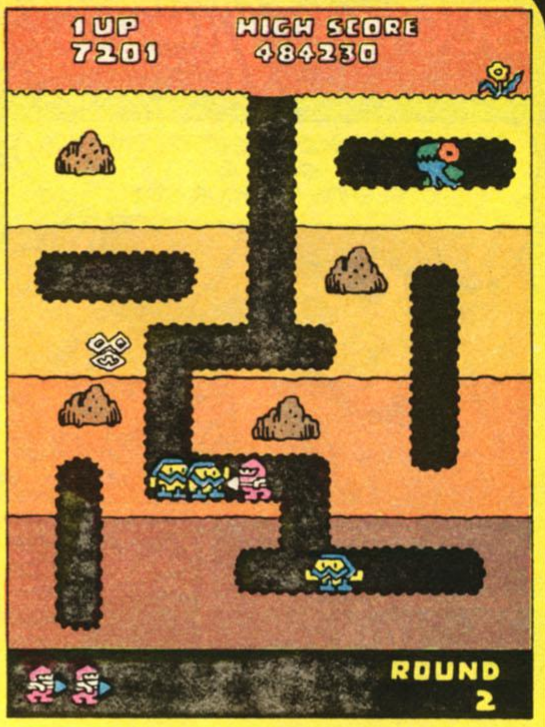
The controls for MOUSETRAP are more complex than for any of the other maze games. There's the four-directional joystick; there's the dog button; and there's a horizontal row of three buttons on the left side of the panel. These are "door" buttons. You use them to block and trap the cats. The colors on the buttons tell you which color doors each one opens.

You have to learn to press these buttons—with your left hand—without taking your eyes off the screen. Put your forefinger on the button at the right, your middle finger on the middle button, and the remaining two

fingers on the button at the left. Use your right hand to switch back and forth between the joystick and the dog button.

As in PAC-MAN, you want to clear as much of the maze as you can before devouring an energizer (dog bone). Remember that the mouse can't become a dog until you press the dog button. It's always wise to wait until a good number of cats are chasing you before using up a dog bone and pushing the button.

One additional problem is the appearance of hawks, which can eat the mouse. A small box labelled "IN" at the center of the maze provides safety from hawks. (The game directions say that it makes the hawk "act stupid.") You should learn when to expect the hawk, and start edging toward the box even before you hear its warning screech.



DIG DUG

Although most people think that maze games began with PAC-MAN, that isn't so. The first maze hit was GOT'CHA, produced by Atari in 1974. Atari waited until 1982 to introduce its second maze game—DIG DUG.

In DIG DUG, you try to destroy underground monsters by pumping them up until they explode. If you're a skillful digger, you can also put an enemy out of commission by plopping a big boulder on him.

While you're pumping up one of the underground creatures, you lose the ability to scurry to safety. So, never start pumping up an enemy when another one is close by. If you do come under attack, all you have to do is release the pump button and make your escape.

There's one other PAC-MAN lookalike that should be mentioned, even though most people may never get a chance to see it. It's K.C. MUNCHKIN, a cartridge for the Odyssey home system.

The appearance of K.C. MUNCHKIN on the market didn't sit well with Atari, which owns the home video rights to PAC-MAN. Atari claimed that the game was so much like PAC-MAN that it violated the copyright laws.

Atari sued Odyssey and won. The judge ruled that K.C. MUNCHKIN *is* a copy of the original PAC-MAN. Odyssey was ordered to stop making and selling the game.

Apparently, spinning off one video game from another is something like borrowing your friend's homework. You can get away with copying, but copying too closely will get you into trouble.

—George Sullivan

Art by Ron Zalme

SCOTTIE in A Cracker Jack® story
SCOTTIE, THE SCORE IS TIED, TIME HAS RUN OUT, BUT YOU'VE GOT TWO FOUL SHOTS. SHOW 'EM YOUR STUFF.
COACH
GOSH, I'LL TRY COACH.
GULP... HERE GOES.
OH NO... I MISSED.
BOINK!
ONE MORE CHANCE SCOTTIE, YOU CAN DO IT--
YOU'RE A CRACKER JACK!
WHEN YOU'RE REALLY GOOD-THEY CALL YOU CRACKER JACK
SWISH
BASKET
YEA, SCOTTIE!
WE'RE THE CHAMPS!
WHAT A CRACKER JACK!
100% NATURAL no additives no preservatives
Cracker Jack
Toy Surprise INSIDE
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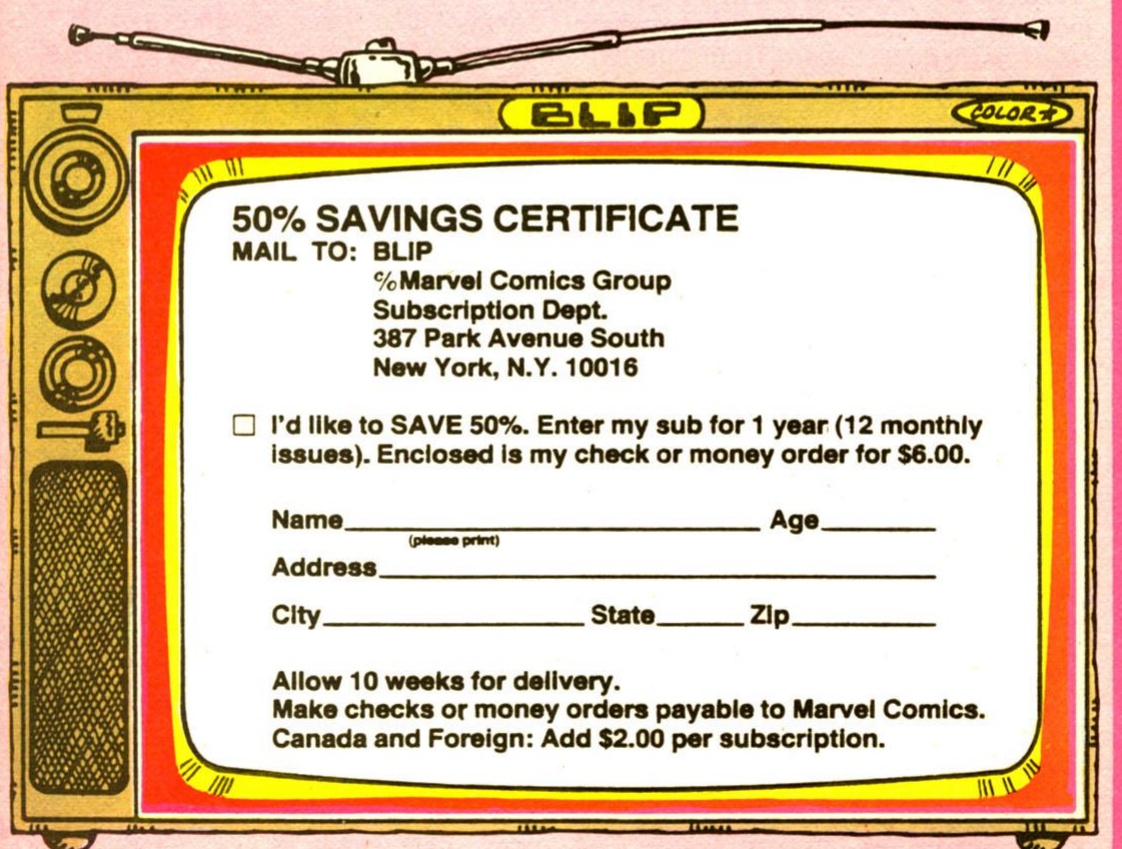

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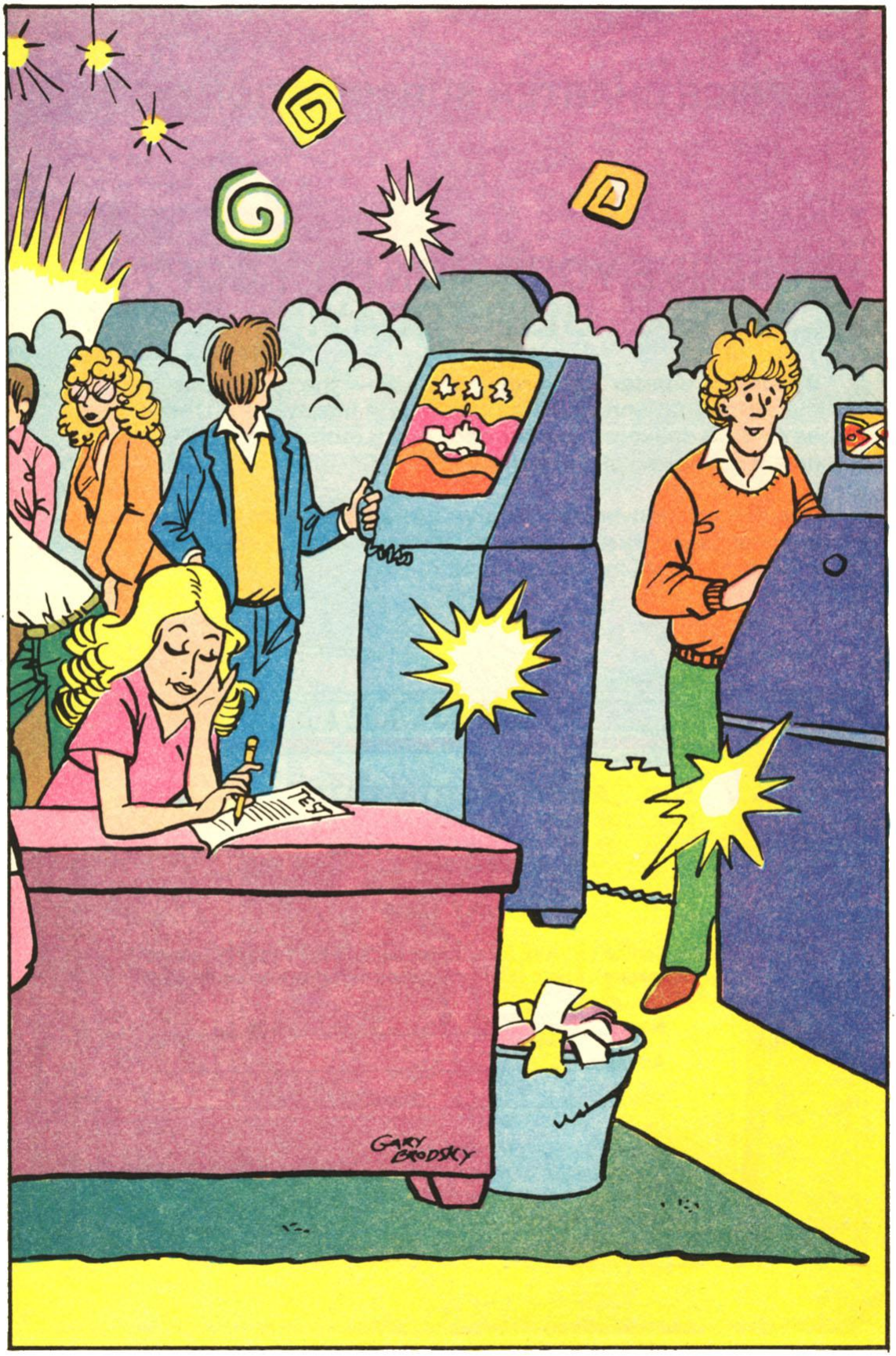

TEST
GARY BRODSKY

BLIP QUIZ

All right, quiet down in the back of the room. So far, you've just been having fun with this issue. Now it's time to do a little work.

We've prepared a little quiz for you, to see how much you know about arcade games. Some of the questions are easy, but some may stop you dead in your tracks. We'll give you the answers next month.

So get ready. Loosen up your wrists, spread your feet a little, and take a deep breath. Here goes!

1. What's the name of the little guy who's trying to save the woman in DONKEY KONG?

2. You're on the first level of TRON, and you've cleared the cone and the spiders. How many light traces do you have to destroy?

3. You're on the second screen in DONKEY KONG, and Mario has knocked out two yellow slots. How many slots are left?

4. You've just put a quarter into the BERZERK machine. How many attackers are you facing?

5. You're playing VENTURE, and you're traveling from one room to another. A bunch of little green creatures are chasing you. What are they called?

6. You're going after the MCP tank in TRON. How many times do you have to hit it, in order to destroy it?

7. One of the bases in MISSILE COMMAND is called Alpha, and one is called Delta. What's the third one called?

8. Which enemy is worth the highest number of points in DEFENDER?

9. The carpenter in DONKEY KONG has been using the hammer to destroy barrels. The hammer begins to flash, as a warning that he's about to lose it. What color does it flash?

10. If you get into trouble in ASTEROIDS, you can make your ship disappear and come back in another location. What button do you have to push to make that happen?

Okay, time's up. Pens and pencils down. If you want to know how well you did, check the next issue of BLIP.

FIND THE FAKE

They say that truth is stranger than fiction. *We* say that, with video games, it's sometimes impossible to tell the difference. And we're going to prove it to you.

We've described four video games on this page. Each one sounds a bit —well—eccentric. You might even think they sound ridiculous.

But here's the point: Three of these game are real. We've only made one of them up.

Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to figure out which one we made up. Go ahead and see if you can find the fake.

BURGER TIME

You control a merry chef, who trots over hamburgers, buns, tomato slices, and pieces of cheese. As he passes over an ingredient, it falls to the bottom of the screen. The idea is to create a superburger ready to be served. But watch out for the hot dog, the egg, and the pickle, who are all out to catch the chef and bring him down.

CLEANUP

Your parents will be home soon, and your room looks like the ground floor of a demolished building. A timer begins a countdown. You have to get the room straightened up before your parents get home. As you go on, the game gets more and more difficult, because you have fewer and fewer hiding places to cram your stuff into.

PREPPIE

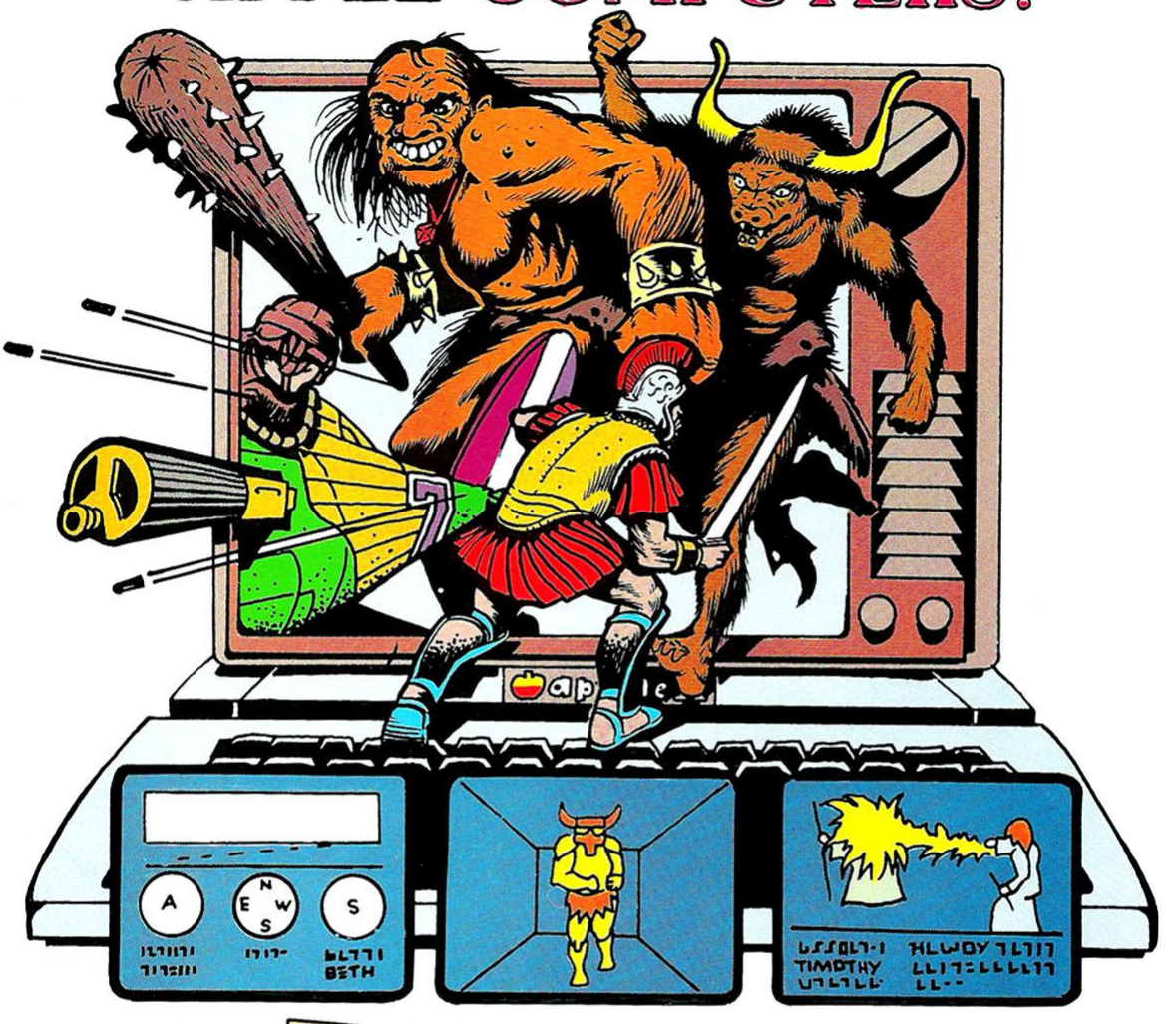
You control Wadsworth Overcash, a rich young man with a problem. He has to make his way to the center of the screen, avoiding such things as lawn mowers, bulldozers, and golf carts as he goes. Your goal is to pick up golf balls scattered around the terrain and return them to the bottom of the screen.

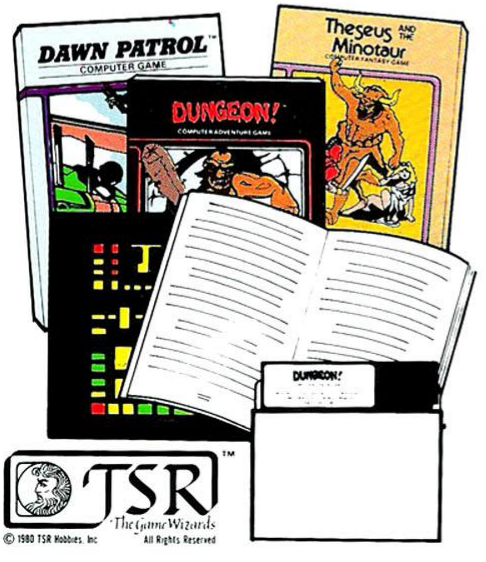
ESCAPE

You're a rock musician who has just finished a concert, for which you'll be paid $50,000. But you have to make your way past a series of obstacles to a limousine if you want to collect your money. You must dodge the shifty-eyed agents, the security people, and a flock of groupies. If any of them slows you down, you lose a piece of your fifty grand.

There you have it. Remember, only *one* of them is too silly to be true. In the next issue of BLIP, we'll tell you which one is fake, and who's responsible for the other three.

A REALISTIC LOOK AT AFFORDABLE GAMES FOR APPLE® COMPUTERS.





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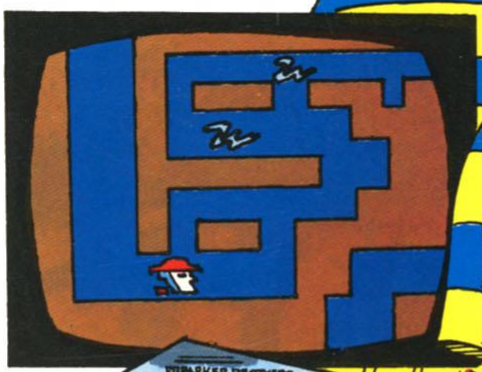
Tutankham

THE HOME VIDEO GAME YOU'VE WAITED 3000 YEARS FOR



COMING SOON!

Tutankham, the video game where you race through a pyramid to find Tut's treasure. The game where you're attacked by the fiendish guardians of the tomb. And you fight back with your laser guns. You capture the keys to the treasure room and then the treasure is yours. All the action of the hit arcade game is coming to your Atari® or Sears® home video system. From Parker Brothers, of course.

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THE ONES TO BEAT

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